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LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS
DEPT FOR AF/E

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PROP](#) [PHUM](#) [ER](#)
SUBJECT: PFDJ INVADES THE SCHOOLS

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A McIntyre for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (SBU) On March 26, the American School in Asmara implemented its first mandatory political-education meeting, a new requirement directed by the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE). These meetings are instituted by the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the nation's sole political party. All Eritrean school employees are required to attend the weekly meetings, the minutes and attendance of which are regularly handed to the Ministry of Education (MOE).

¶2. (C) According to an Embassy source, these meetings have been mandatory for all businesses for several months now, and the MOE has only recently directed schools to comply with this requirement. Any institution or business with 20 or more individuals is required to hold a meeting. Those with less than 20 individuals must join with other organizations in order to hold meetings.

¶3. (C) The weekly meetings focus on lessons drawn from an official pamphlet on Eritrea, provided by PFDJ offices. The PFDJ also seems to have an increasing stranglehold on the information used in these meetings. Initially, the lessons were to be taught by the meeting chairperson (an individual elected by the school employees) using the aforementioned pamphlets. As of the most recent meeting (April 9), the PFDJ has insisted on bringing its own representatives to teach the lessons rather than distributing the pamphlets to the meeting chairperson (Note: Post is nonetheless attempting to obtain a copy of the pamphlet. End Note.) Additionally, each meeting participant is required to "donate" 3 Nakfa each month. These meetings are held in addition to the regularly required zoba, or neighborhood, meetings. Individuals can pay their 3 Nakfa at either meeting, but are required to attend both.

¶4. (C) AS IMPORTANT AS NATIONAL SERVICE

These meetings are of extreme importance to the GSE. Those who do not attend face varying consequences. As point of fact, one of the American School's instructors (a Jehovah's Witness and a conscientious objector to both national service and the government-mandated meetings) was recently terminated from the school. A second teacher was also terminated for not having completed his national service requirements.
MCINTYRE